

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUEBEC 00049 211417Z
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: THE IMPORTANCE OF THINKING TRIBAL IN QUEBEC

1. BOTH CANDIDATES FOR QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP, CLAUDE RYAN AND RAYMOND GARNEAU, HAVE GIVEN GREAT EMPHASIS IN THEIR INTRAPARTY CAMPAIGNING TO THE NEED FOR GUARANTTEES FOR THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS AND HAVE CONDEMNED THE PQ FOR ITS PREOCCUPATION WITH "COLLECTIVE LIBERTIES" AT EXPENSE OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES. MOST NORTH AMERICANS ARE LIKELY TO FIND THIS ENDORSEMENT OF THE "RIGHTS OF MAN" UNEXCEPTIONAL, EVEN BANAL. THE MAJORITY OF QUEBECOIS, HOWEVER, MAY NOT AGREE WITH THEIR CONCEPT OF SOCIAL PRIORITIES. LIKE MOST THREATENED MINORITY SOCIETIES THE QUEBECOIS HISTORICALLY HAVE GIVEN FIRST PRIORITY TO COLLECTIVE SURVIVAL. THE RIGHT OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO THREATEN SURVIVAL OF THE COLLECTIVITY THROUGH NON-CONFORMITY, OR EVEN LACK OF SOLIDARITY, HAS NOT OFTEN BEEN TOLERATED. CONFORMITY IN TRADITIONAL QUEBEC SOCIETY IN THE 18 TH AND EARLY 19 CENTURY WAS FREQUENTLY ENFORCED BY M. LE CURE WITH ALL THE FEARSOME AUTHORITY OF A VENGEFUL JEHOVAH. STRONG INDIVIDUALISTS WERE CHARACTERISTICALLY ENCOURAGED

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PAGE 02 QUEBEC 00049 211417Z

TO "GO WEST" OR TO "LES ETATS." IN EXTREME CASES, THE ULTIMATE PENALTY OF MORAL AND SOCIAL BANISHMENT THROUGH EXCOMMUNICATION COULD AND WAS EXERCISED.

2. THE FACT THAT QUEBEC SOCIETY HAS SECULARIZED AND URBANIZED IN THE PAST 30 YEARS HAS NOT MEANT THAT THE AVERAGE QUEBECOIS HAS LOST THE HABIT OF BELIEVING OR THAT HIS PRE-

OCCUPATION WITH GROUP SURVIVAL HAS YET DISAPPEARED. MODERN
SECULAR EDUCATION AND A GROWING SELF-CONFIDENCE HAVE
BEGUN TO DIMINISH THE QUEBECOIS SENSE OF INFERIORITY AND
HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH SURVIVAL* HOWEVER SUCH INSTINCTIVE FEARS
DIE SLOWLY, ESPECIALLY WHEN A DEMONSTRABLE THREAT TO THE
ETHOS OF A SOCIETY CONTINUES TO BE WIDELY PERCEIVED.
(COEXISTENCE IN NORTH AMERICA WITH A VITAL 230 MILLION STRONG
ANGLO-SAXON CIVILIZATION ENCOURAGES CREDIBILITY IN THE THREAT
FOR MANY QUEBECOIS.)

3. THE PARTI QUEBECOIS HAS SIEZED UPON AND WAS PERHAPS CREATED
AS A RESULT OF THIS INSTINCT FOR COLLECTIVE SURVIVAL. THE
INSISTENCE ON THE PRIMARY OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES BY A
SOPHISTICATED CARTESIAN SUCH AS RYAN OR A CONFIDENT NORTH
AMERICAN LIKE GARNEAU MAY GAIN THEM MUCH LESS SUPPORT AMONG
THE QUEBECOIS MASS THAN THEY THINK. ON THE CONTRARY, IT COULD
CREATE ANTAGONISM SHOULD EITHER OF THESE WORTHY GENTLEMEN
ATTEMPT TO APPLY IN A SPECIFIC CASE WHAT MAY BE TOLERATED AS
A GENERALIZATION.

4. I WONDER WHETHER THESE PROSPECTIVE LIBERAL LEADERS MAY NOT
HAVE SERIOUSLY MISGUAGED THEIR PROSPECTIVE CLIENTELE. SHOULD THEY
WASTE THEIR ENERGIES ON ISSUES WHICH FAIL TO AROUSE QUEBECOIS
ENTHUSIASM, THEY WILL INEVITABLY FAIL TO ATTRACT THE MASS
SUPPORT NEEDED TO DEFEAT THE PQ, OR WORSE, ANTAGONIZE IMPORTANT
SEGMENTS OF THE TRIBE. I HAVE COME TO BELIEVE THAT AT
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PAGE 03 QUEBEC 00049 211417Z

LEAST ON THIS ISSUE, THE PQ DOES REPRESENT THE DEEPLY FELT
PREOCCUPATION OF A LARGE PORTION OF THE QUEBEC POPULATION.
HOPEFULLY, FEDERALISTS LEADERS WILL PROVE TO BE MORE IN
TOUCH WITH THE GROUP PSYCHE OF THEIR PROSPECTIVE CLIENTELE
ON OTHER ISSUES. MCNAMARA

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